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ABSTRACT

The teaching profession must have certain responsibilities delegated to it by the public if it is to contribute significantly to the improvement of education and to be accountable for what happens in the schools. More is needed than the present extralegal state advisory councils and professional negotiation laws. What we want now in governance is a teaching profession act in every state, created by law, which could give to members of the profession legal power to 1) establish the requirements for and issue certificates for teachers; 2) determine and establish procedures to accredit teacher preparation institutions; 3) define performance criteria for teachers in beginning and later-career roles; 4) conduct a continuous study of teacher standards and practices and recommend needed changes; 5) revoke, suspend, and reinstate certificates when teachers, after a full and fair hearing, are found in violation of the act; and 6) adopt rules and regulations to implement the teaching profession act. The National Council for Teacher Education and Professional Standards (NCTEPS), which is increasing its activities in support of self-governance, is maintaining a clearinghouse so that states may learn from each other the pitfalls to watch for and the various alternatives. Since education is a mass profession it must be organized in states and at the local level in order to develop adequate mechanisms to solve professional problems. [Not available in hardcopy due to reduced size of print.] (JS)

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SECOND DRAFT

SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION: WHY?

Santa Fe, New Mexico
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SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION: WHY?

Schools today need improving--and fast. Almost everyone agrees to that.

But few realize that the potential of the education profession, particularly that of teachers, has never been exploited in regard to improving the schools.

Why?

Because it has been traditional to assume that the teacher takes his direction from others: the officials in the institution in which he is prepared, school district and building administrators, local school boards after he begins to practice, state boards of education, legislators, parents, community leaders and other powerful laymen. The cry has been that education is too important a matter to be left to educators--and multitudes of teachers have passively agreed.

The scene, however, is changing. Both the public (laymen) and teachers are acknowledging that almost no institution in American society, including the school, is coping adequately with the needs and desires of people. Schools harbor obsolescence; in many cases, they are isolated institutions remote from the realities of the larger society.[1]

Much of the blame is being placed on teachers. They are told that they must prove that students are learning before more money will be invested in schools, and they are warned that the public is intending to hold them accountable for the achievement of their pupils as never before.

And teachers are coming to grips with what is needed before they can be held accountable for waht happens in schools. They must be in charge of some things, they say--some things they know the most about because of their professional expertise. This does not mean that they want to <u>control education</u>. They simply want to be in charge of who gets into the profession, how there

persons are prepared, how they continue to be educated as they practice, how competent members can be protected and incompetents weeded out, what are necessary working conditions for proper performance of duties, and what are the best methods to accomplish the educational goals as determined by the entire citizenry of the country (the public, including teacher-citizens.)

Teachers must be liberated from their past traditional role--and fast--if they are to assume a large share of the responsibility oor improving schools.

And that is what self-governance is all about: the liberation of teachers so they can assume <u>their</u> share of responsibility--and use their expertise--in joining <u>with</u> the public to improve education.

The teaching profession must have certain responsibilities delegated to it by the public if it is to contribute significantly to the improvement of education and to be accountable for what happens in the schools.

<u>Problems of the Profession</u>

Why are some colleges and universities that do not meet agreed-upon standards allowed to continue to prepare teachers?[2] And why are school districts permitted to hire those "teachers"? Sub-standard preparation programs must be eliminated.

Student teachers and beginning teachers are treated shabbily in school system after school system. Student teachers frequently have nothing to say about their placement; the same is true of supervising teachers in relation to their acceptance of the student teachers. Beginning teachers are expected to carry the same work load as an experienced teacher, often being assigned, in addition, to the most difficult classes or schools which exist. The profession must not allow this to continue.

Who should be licensed to begin to teach, after what kind of preparation? And who should certify that additional levels of competence have been reached, levels of competence which indicate that the educator can assume increasingly-difficult roles within the school system? The profession, of course, taking into account many different kinds of evidence. Teachers should set performance criteria standards for themselves, and use peer judgment to indicate how well those standards are being met.

Practicing teachers have found it close to impossible to get the kind of continuing education which is relevant to their real problems. They have had to pursue the advanced-college-degree route because such degrees have been tied to salary schedules by school board members who believe that completed college courses are the sole indication of the quality of a teacher. Teachers must have the power to say what is is that they need to learn to keep up with changing times--and to be able, through state and local governance procedures, to see that they get it.

Where We Are Now in Governance

In a paper published early in 1967, the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, NEA, noted:

> Over the past 35 years, state departments of education (chief state school officer and his staff and the respective state board of education) have been provided more and more opportunities for members of the teaching profession to participate in formulating certification requirements. Such participation began with the appointment of extralegal advisory councils. By 1946, 48 states had some form of advisory machinery for teacher education and certification.... The functions of these groups vary greatly from state to state.... Eleven of the 48 states...have bodies which are established by law. Some of these have a degree of decision-making power.3 Most state advisory groups...are extra-legal; they range in size from 8 to 225

> members. Collectively, these committees, councils, and boards make recommendations regarding teacher education and have varying degrees of influence. . .[4]

It must be noted, however, that although some of these bodies have been created by law, they are all still advisory, without specific legal power. This means that a lay group is making final decisions, choosing whether or not to accept the recommendations of the professional group.

In recent years, teachers in many states have gained control over some matters through professional negotiation laws.[5] Tenure laws, too, have in many places been strengthened. Collective bargaining at the local level for teachers is rapidly becoming a way of life. But matters negotiated have been largely economic, having to do with salaries and welfare benefits. Forward-looking state associationsleaders are suggesting that the time has come when professional standards matters can be negotiated, too--at least some of them--at the local level. The theme of the NCTEPS national conference a year ago in Washington, D. C. was "Negotiating for Professionalization." A publication resulting from that conference is being circulated widely.[6]

The fact that self-governance for the teaching profession has been declared one of the top priorities for the NEA this coming year is, however, new. The major portion of the TEPS budget for the next fifteen (15) months is to be devoted to this effort. A dozen pilot states have been identified, and work with them is already in progress.[7]

Last year more than a thousand persons from across the United States participated in eight regional TEPS conferences,[8] considering "Professional Determination: Substance and Strategy." They gave attention to a model

Teaching Profession Act, discussing it, reacting to it, suggesting alternatives for various aspects of it. Following these conferences, the Act was rewritten.[9]

It should be noted that the topic of self-governance is not a new one for NCTEPS. For a number of years the Commission has attempted to stimulate the profession in regard to self-determination and given aid, insofar as possible, to states ready for action. (See list of activities in attachments.[10]) Two years ago a joint project with the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Commission, NEA, was established, with the two Commissions--TEPS and PRRR--sharing the cost of a staff member to take major responsibility for governance.

What we Want in Governance

We want a Teaching Profession Act in every state, created by law. That Act should give to members of the profession legal power to:

1. establish the requirements for and issue certificates for teachers.

2. determine and establish the procedures to be used to decide which institutions of higher education are or are not qualified to prepare teachers (accreditation). This could include standards for school district-initiated and sponsored programs of continuing education for teachers--based on teachers needs.

3. define performance criteria for teachers for both beginning and later-career roles, in the content of minimum working conditions under which teachers will provide services.

4. conduct a continuous study of teacher standards and practices and recommend needed changes.

5. have the power to revoke, suspend, and reinstate certificates when teachers, after a full and fair hearing, are found to be in fiolation of the Teaching Profession Act of a particular state or the standards established under it.

6. have the power to adopt rules and regulations to implement the Teaching Profession Act, including the power to employ staff and legal counsel, to subpoena witnesses and records, to place witnesses under oath, and to establish rules for and hold hearings, or cause them to be held, at appropriate places within the state.

The Teaching Profession Act in each state should provide for selection, by their peers in education, of a number of professionals who will serve on a Standards and Practices Commission or Commissions which will have legal power to carry out the above duties. This group should be accountable to the entire profession for its decisions.

A Teaching Profession Act at the state level will undergird what can be done at the local level, just as a state professional negotiations law does.

We also want, in governance, expertise and knowhow at the local level in including standards matters as a part of negotiations procedures--wherever appropriate.

Some Sufferable and Insufferable Alternatives

Should a state board of education have the veto power over a professional body created through a Teaching Profession Act? Only the people within a given state can decide that. That may in a particular state be the only way legislation is possible.

Shall there be a standards board and a practices commission, or a single commission in charge of both standards and practices? Since the standards board is legislative in nature, and since the practices commission is judicial in function, it seems logical that there would be two. Some states, however, have a rationale for having a single commission. Once again, state leaders planning for new legislation related to self-governance of the teaching profession should heed the experience of educators in other states where different kinds of plans have been tried--and then decide what seems best for their own state.

Should one begin with only a practices commission, if it is not possible to get a standards board, too? Probably not, since practices must be considered in relation to standards and not apart from them. The idea of "cleaning house" and "weeding out the incompetents" generally appeals most to the general public--legislators in particular--where teachers are concerned. Education is needed, therefore, to make clear why standards and practices must be considered together rather than singly.

Should the profession settle for appointment by the governor, without substantial involvement of the profession? No, because members of the standards boards and/or practices commissions would not then be accountable to the profession.

Should a Teaching Profession Act be passed if there is not provision for adequate financing? No. It is then impossible to implement and so may as well not exist.

Some Pitfalls to Watch for

Inadequate financing could make a Teaching Profession Act inoperable. An education association should never agree to finance the standards board and practices commission, this is a state responsibility and should be financed through teacher certification fees or something similar. The state of Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, for example, has a yearly budget of approximately $39,000, acquired by adding a three dollar ($3.00) charge to each certificate. Such financing allows the hiring of staff, the support of studies, and meeting expenses of the Commissson or Commissions.

The choice of persons who will serve on the standards boards and/or practices commissions could well be another pitfall. They must be representative of the entire profession, not just the education association (although that association can certainly be influential in getting persons nominated and placed.) They must not be political appointees of the governor--or even the state superintendent of public instruction, or of the colleges which prepare teachers. If the persons are persons named by means of petition or by general election, they will then be accountable to a constituency for their decisions.

The relationship of the Teaching Profession Act to other education legislation already in existence in a state needs to be considered carefully. Possible conflicts with negotiations and tenure laws need to be checked before legislation is proposed.

Feedback to the professionals in a state as to what is happening as a result of the passage of a teaching Profession Act is vital. Unless the support of all segments of the profession is assured, the standards board and/or practices commission could easily become a fragmented group unable to implement an otherwise good law.

A final pitfall: Legislation is only the beginning; once a Teaching Profession Act has become law, the organization of the profession to carry out its responsibilities in connection with that Act, the checks and balances necessary, and the evaluation of progress must take place. Here it is hoped that states can learn from the experience of others: NCTEPS is maintaining a national clearing house for just this purpose.

Organizing for Governance

Education is a mass profession. It includes some three and a half million persons.[11] If they are to use their expertise to solve professional problems, they must be organized in states and at the local level so that they can develop adequate mechanisms, both legal and otherwise, to deal with those professional problems.

The role of the professional association such as the NEA and the state and local association is a significant one. That role must be one of leadership, of committment to the principle that it must involve the entire profession in making decisions about self-governance, not just association members.

The fact that the association has such a large membership, however,[12] means that it can be influential in placing its members on boards and commissions to govern the profession, in feeding in recommendations about performance criteria, etc., in suggesting studies to be undertaken and assisting with them, and in similar tasks. The TEPS Commission in a state could be an important check and balance for a state standards board and/or commission.

State and local associations, too, will be more free to aid and support their members than they are now in states where professional practices legislation does not exist or where it is weak. In cases of alleged ethics violations, for example, they can help a member assess alternatives open to him, including whether or not to appeal to a state practices commission. They will no longer have to adjudicate, as they feel compelled to do now. They can work in concert with a state board and a practices commission, deciding which functions each one should perform in order to improve the profession of teaching.

FOOTNOTES

[1]"The NEA Program on Instruction." Paper prepared by a special committee of the Professional Development and Instructional Services staff, June 1970.

[2]National Education Association, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. Milestones in Teacher Education and Professional Standards. Washington, D. C: the Commission, 1970. p.11.

[3]By 1970 this number had risen to 16. See: Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[4]National Education Association, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. "Guidelines for Professional Standards Boards". Washington, D. C.: the Commission, January 1967. pp. 4-6.

[5]NEA, NCTEPS, Milestones, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[6]National Education Association, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. Negotiating for Professionalization. Report of the Twentieth National TEPS Conference. Washington, D. C.: the Commission, 1970.

[7]See "Report of Write-in Conference, Boston, Massachusetts, June 3-5, 1970," and "Meeting of Twelve States on a Teaching Profession Act, June 15-16, 1970, Washington, D. C."--attached.

[8]Atlanta, Washington, D. C., Boston, Minneapolis, Cleveland, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Denver--December 1969--January 1970.

[9]See "Teaching Profession Act" and "One Act or Two?"--attached.

[10]See "TEPS and the Promotion of Self-Governance for the Profession," attached.

[11]1,999,000 public elementary and secondary teachers; 240,000 private elementary and secondary teachers; 250,000 administrators, supervisors, and consultants; 735,000 professional personnel in higher education; 100,000 professional staff in organizations, governments offices of education and private agencies; 3,400,000 total. Figures from TEPS slide-tape presentation on governance.

[12]NEA membership in excess of one million as of May 31, 1970.